Data regarding household internet users

4605. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 2585 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 26th April, 2006 and state:

(a) the reasons for not collecting data pertaining to household internet users in the country;

(b) the manner in which Government propose to increase the number of household internet users in the country particularly when it is not having any kind of data regarding household internet users; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken by Government to make internet connectivity affordable to the common man particularly to lower middle class families?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) Government has issued licenses to service providers to provide Internet services. Licensed service providers provide Internet services under their license in the country to different categories of subscribers based on their respective business model. It is for the service providers to segregate different types of subscribers like household, corporate etc. suiting to their business models. Government is collecting information only in respect of number of subscribers.

(b) and (c) With the impressive growth of Telephone density, increased awareness of Internet services and low tariffs, all categories of Internet users including household users would grow. The following steps have been taken/proposed to be taken by Government to increase the spread of Internet services and to make Internet connectivity affordable to common man:

(i) Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Limited (MTNL) are expecting to offer the Internet services at affordable rates by passing benefits of falling cost of equipment, Customer Premise Equipment (CPE) and International Bandwidth to the customers. This expected to have a positive impact on lowering of tariffs for Internet services in the market because of

their dominant status in Internet and Broadband services and intense competition with private players.

(ii) Government propose to provide broadband connectivity to villages in a phased manner and Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) is working on schemes for providing financial assistance by way of subsidy for the broadband active Infrastructure such as Base Transmitting Station (BTS) and by utilizing the existing passive infrastructure available with the Telecom service providers.

(iii) The decision of the Government to reduce entry fees and Licence fees for National Long Distance and International Long Distance services has spurned competition and number of operators are likely to increase resulting in further reduction of cost of National and International bandwidth. This is expected to reduce the cost of Internet services to thereby benefiting common man including lower middle class families.

Post Office (Amendment) Bill, 2006

4606. SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Department of Posts is re-working on the Post Office (Amendment) Bill, 2006 in view of criticism from courier companies; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard with changes being proposed in the new Bill?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SHAKEEL AHMAD): (a) and (b) The proposals to amend the Indian Post Office Act, 1898 have not so far been finalized.

Investment to streamline operations

4607. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Department of Posts proposes to invest Rs. 6000 crores to streamline its operations;